

# Reconstructing Ancestral Oceanic Society



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AN ADEQUATE RECONSTRUCTION OF ANCESTRAL OCEANIC SOCIETY will require the combined resources of historical linguistics, archaeology, and comparative ethnology, as Green and Pawley (1999) so eloquently wrote.<sup>1</sup> Historical linguistics can reconstruct linguistic forms and their associated meanings; archaeology can locate artifact assemblages in space and absolute time; and comparative ethnology can provide distributional evidence and useful analogies. As a demonstration, Green and Pawley showed how the comparative ethnology of Oceanic domicile arrangements and the reconstruction of Proto-Oceanic (POC) terms for house architecture and settlement patterns could be used to interpret the archaeological remains and arrangements of buildings in an early Lapita site in the Reef Islands in Melanesia. They were able to match POC terms with a main dwelling of a household or hamlet (*\*Rumaq*); a possible men's house (*\*kamaliR*); open-sided sheds used for cooking and food preparation (*\*pale*); a possible platform (*\*patar*); the centerpost of a house (*\*turu*); a boundary marking fence (*\*bai*); an earth oven (*\*gumun*), and fireplaces (*\*rapuR*). Ethnographic analogy suggests spatial differentiation of the dwelling based on male and female activities. No inferences were made about the social organization of this community, aside from the fact that it had, in Marshall's (1984) classification, a "type 10" sibling terminology. Marshall declined to make any inferences from types of sibling terminology to aspects of social organization, which leaves the anthropologist wishing for a little more.

My purpose is to show how a combined analysis of historical linguistic, ethnological, and cross-cultural data can be used to reconstruct the general features of Ancestral Oceanic social organization, including descent, residence, stratification, and marriage alliance. The motivation for this analysis derives in part from two conclusions in Lévi-Strauss' (1969) *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*: (1) Island (Oceanic-speaking) Melanesia is much less bilateral than commonly thought; and (2) Island Melanesia represents a continuation of Austronesian systems of generalized exchange. From this point of view, the distinction between western Island Melanesia, the homeland of Ancestral Oceanic Society and that of Polynesia, the last region of Oceanic settlement, is real.<sup>2</sup> As a test of my reconstruction of Ancestral Oceanic social organization, I will compare it with that of Baegu, the

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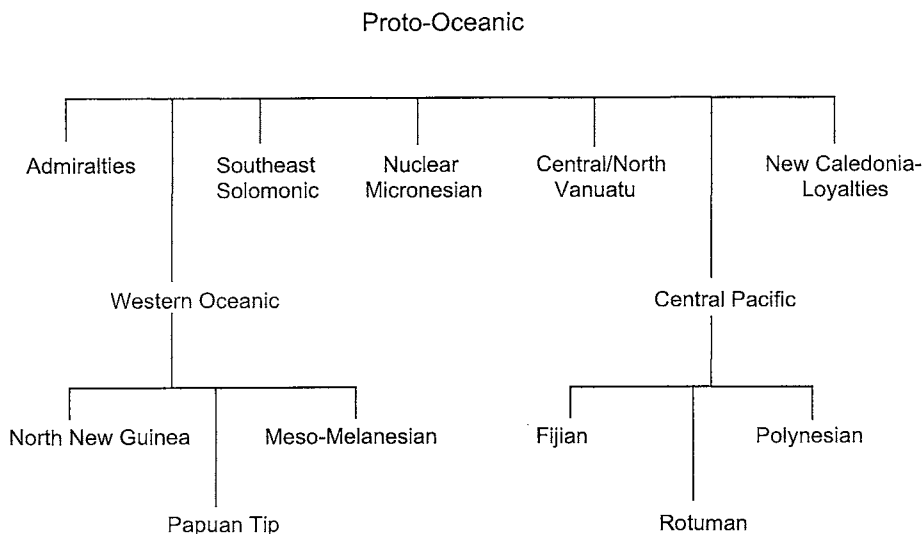


Fig. 1. Higher-order subgroups of the Oceanic languages (from Pawley and Ross 1993).

Island Melanesian community Green and Pawley (1999) took as an ethnographic guideline in their historical linguistic and archaeological study of early Oceanic house and settlement patterns. The results of this analysis have important implications for previous and current hypotheses regarding Ancestral Oceanic Society.

#### BACKGROUND

The Austronesian (AN) language family includes between 1000 and 1200 languages within a region stretching from Madagascar to Easter Island (Grimes 1992; Tryon 1993). Proto-Austronesian (PAN) was spoken 5000 to 6000 years ago somewhere in Southeast Asia, probably on or near Formosa (Blust 1995). The AN family tree as reconstructed by Blust (1984–1985) divides into Formosan—a convenient cover term for at least six primary branches of AN—and Malayo-Polynesian (MP)—the remaining languages. The Oceanic (OC) language family is a subgroup of Eastern Malayo-Polynesian and consists of some 450 languages spoken in Island Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia. The major subgroups of OC are shown in Figure 1, and their location in Figure 2 (Pawley and Ross 1993).<sup>3</sup> The “rake-like” structure of the OC family tree, in the view of Pawley (1981) and Pawley and Green (1984), reflects the rapidity of the OC expansion. It “might also reflect continued interaction after divergence and/or dispersal of the populations” (M. Graves, personal communication).

Ancestral Oceanic Society is believed to have developed in the region of the Bismarck Archipelago in western Melanesia around 1500 B.C. By 1100 to 1200 B.C., daughter societies were expanding eastward, arriving in the Fiji-Tonga-Samoa area around 900 to 1000 B.C., and reaching central eastern Micronesia and eventually the more remote islands of Polynesia by A.D. 1000 (Green and Pawley 1999; Pawley and Ross 1993, 1995). The archaeological manifestation of Ancestral Oceanic Society is Lapita, a cultural complex consisting of a distinctive type

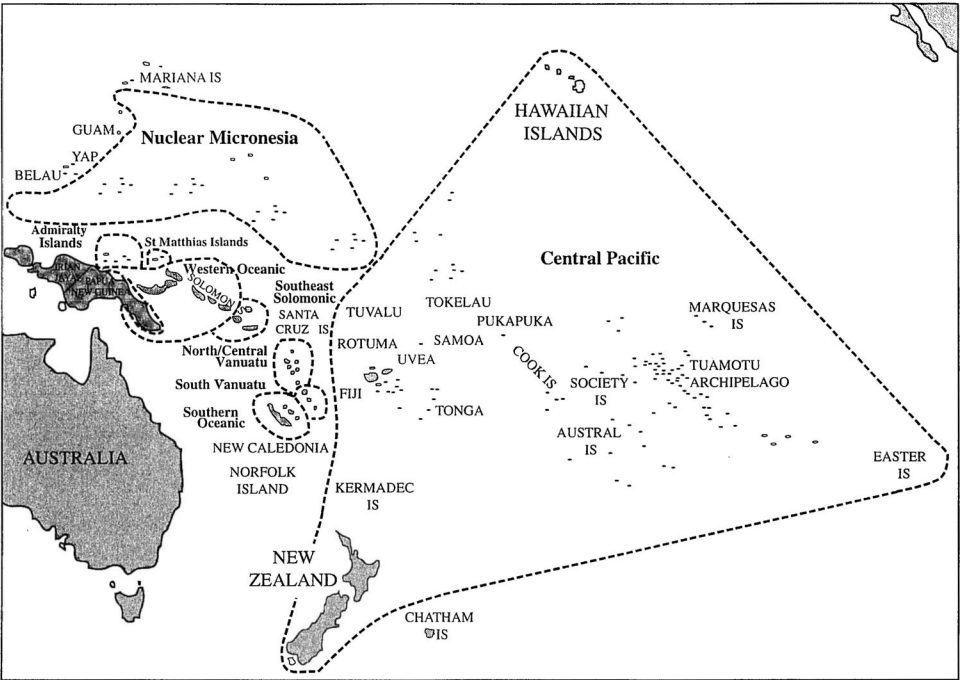


Fig. 2. Location of higher-order subgroups of the Oceanic languages (from Pawley and Ross 1995).

of pottery and a sophisticated maritime and horticultural economy (Green 1979; Kirch 1997).<sup>4</sup> Ancestral Polynesian Society is a descendant of Ancestral Oceanic Society, more specifically, of the easternmost expansion of the Lapita peoples into the Fiji-Tonga-Samoa area around 800 to 1000 B.C. (Green 1978, 1979, 1997; Kirch 1997).

POC kinship terminology as reconstructed by Milke (1958) and revised by Pawley (1981) and Pawley and Green (1984) is shown in Table 1. The terminology for males in the first ascending generation (+1) is bifurcate merging ( $F = FB \neq MB$ ) while that for females is generational ( $M = MZ = FZ$ ), according to Milke, but possibly bifurcate merging according to Pawley ( $M = MZ \neq FZ$ ).<sup>5</sup> Proto-Polynesian (PPN) kinship terminology is similarly bifurcate merging for +1 males and either bifurcate merging or generational for +1 females (Marck 1996). According to Blust (1980), Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP) terminology is bifurcate merging for both males and females. POC cousin terminology is Hawaiian ( $G = PGC$ ). POC lacked the affinal-consanguineal equations reconstructed by Blust (1980) for early Austronesian, that is, for PMP or PAN.

DESCENT GROUPS

The evidence for descent groups in Ancestral Oceanic Society is linguistic, distributional, and crosscultural. Pawley (1982) reconstructs the term *\*kainanga* as 'clan' and, following Goodenough (1955), as 'landholding descent group' "as far back as the immediate common ancestor of the Polynesian and Nuclear Micro-

TABLE 1. PROTO-OCEANIC KINSHIP TERMS

* <i>tumpu</i>	Grandparent, grandchild
* <i>tama-</i>	Father, father's brother
* <i>tina-</i>	Mother, mother's sister
* <i>matuqa-</i>	Mother's brother
* <i>aya</i> (?)	Father's sister
* <i>tuqaka-</i>	Elder same-sex sibling
* <i>tansi-</i>	Younger same-sex sibling
* <i>m<sup>w</sup>aqane</i>	Woman's brother
* <i>papine</i>	Man's sister
* <i>natu-</i>	Child
* <i>(qa)lawa</i>	Man's sister's child
* <i>makumpu-</i>	Grandchild
* <i>pugao-</i>	Parent-in-law, child-in-law
* <i>ipaR</i>	Wife's brother, husband's sister

Sources: Pawley (1981), Pawley and Green (1984).

nesian groups, a stage which either coincided with Proto-Oceanic or was close to it" (Pawley and Green 1984:132). Chowning (1991), however, argued that on the basis of present evidence, \**kainaga* cannot be attributed to POC but only to a lower order branch of POC. She suggested that another term, \**qapusa*, might conceivably imply the existence of descent groups in Proto-Oceanic Society, but concluded that even if \**kainaga* or \**qapusa* could be attributed to POC, "we would have no clue as to what kind of descent group or category might be represented. For the former, cognate terms designate a patrilineal group in Tikopia [a Polynesian outlier in Melanesia], a matrilineal one in Truk [in Micronesia], and a cognatic one in Maori [in Polynesia]" (p. 70). She also maintained that POC kin terms provide no help.

If POC society had unilinear descent, one would expect either that a term for cross-cousin was reconstructible, or that many more of the societies would be like Truk and the Trobriands in having kinship systems (Crow, in these cases) that group cross-cousins with other kin types. I would also expect a reconstructible term for FaSi, unless, as in Kove, she was called by the same term as MoBr, but this does not seem to happen in many Melanesian societies (Chowning 1991:70).

Chowning's requirements for inferring the presence of unilineal descent groups in Ancestral Oceanic Society are unnecessarily stringent. Generalizing from an early study by Murdock (1947), the presence of a term for MB alone is sufficient to establish that descent in Ancestral Oceanic and also Ancestral Malayo-Polynesian and Ancestral Polynesian Society was almost certainly unilinear (Hage 1998a). As shown in Table 2, bifurcate merging terminology in which  $F = FB \neq MB$  is usually found together with unilinear descent groups.<sup>6</sup> The inference is that Ancestral Oceanic descent groups were unilinear and that cognatic descent groups were a later development. Given that changes in kinship terminology generally follow changes in descent and marriage (N. J. Allen 1989; R. Fox 1967; Lowie 1948; Murdock 1949), the exceptions in Table 2 can best be interpreted as survivals of earlier unilinear systems. This result has several interesting and important implications for previous attempts to reconstruct Ancestral Oceanic and Ancestral Malayo-Polynesian social organization.

TABLE 2. THE RELATION BETWEEN BIFURCATE MERGING KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY AND DESCENT GROUPS

TYPE OF KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY	DESCENT GROUPS			TOTAL
	UNILINEAL	COGNATIC	ABSENCE	
Bifurcate merging (F = FB ≠ MB)	47	—	8	55
Other	63	10	47	120

Sources: Murdock (1967, 1970); Murdock and White (1969).

First, Milke’s (1958) historical linguistic reconstruction of POC kinship terminology does not support Murdock’s (1949) typological reconstruction of Ancestral Oceanic and Ancestral Malayo-Polynesian Society as bilateral—“Normal Hawaiian” in type, that is, a type defined by bilateral kindreds, bilocal residence, and the absence of descent groups. Nor does it support Goodenough’s (1955) modification of Murdock—the addition of cognatic descent groups. The presence of a term for MB (and ZCms) is not, as Milke thought, a minor imperfection in an otherwise generational-Hawaiian terminology consistent with a bilateral or cognatic system of social organization. On the contrary, it is diagnostic of a unilineal system. This negative evidence for bilaterality only adds to the demonstration that a strict application of Murdock’s evolutionary algorithm shows that Ancestral Malayo-Polynesian Society was just as likely to have been “Iroquois” (matrilineal) in type (Blust 1980; Hage and Harary 1996).

Second, Rivers’ (1914) deduction of unilineal descent in early Melanesian (Ancestral Oceanic) Society was essentially correct. Rivers made this deduction from the widespread association between classificatory kin terms (F = FB ≠ MB, M = MZ ≠ FZ, and G = PssGC ≠ PosGC) and clan organization and exogamy. Cross-aunts and -uncles (FZ and MB) will always be in a clan different from parallel aunts and uncles (MZ and FB), and so will their children. According to Rivers (1914, I: 8), “Whenever one finds that these distinctions do not exist, it is also found that the clan organization is absent or in course of profound modification.” Rivers interpreted the presence of a parity distinction in Melanesian sibling terms (Zms ≠ Bws) in a similar way. Cross-siblings, because of exogamy, “will at an early age come to belong to different social groups within the clan and this separation will be accentuated when the girl marries out and, perhaps at an early age moves to and becomes for all practical purposes a member of another clan” (Rivers 1914, I: 9).

We note that Rivers identified certain other common although not universal features of the “classificatory terminology” in Melanesia, including a seniority distinction in terms for parallel siblings (essG ≠ yssG), and self-reciprocal terms, especially for grandparents and grandchildren (PP = CC). As it turns out, bifurcate merging terms for uncles and possibly for aunts, sibling terms based on the distinctions of parity and seniority (Marshall’s type 10 and one of Murdock’s 1968a “Melanesian” types), and self-reciprocal terms for grandparents and grandchildren are all features of POC kinship terminology (Milke 1958; Pawley 1981).

Third, if Blust’s (1980) reconstruction of PMP \**ma(n)tuqa* as ‘MB’ is valid, then so is his inference of unilineal descent in early Austronesian society, the ultimate

TABLE 3. THE RELATION BETWEEN RELATIVE SEX SIBLING TERMINOLOGY AND DESCENT GROUPS

TYPE OF SIBLING TERMINOLOGY	DESCENT GROUPS			TOTAL
	UNILINEAL	COGNATIC	ABSENCE	
Relative sex	31	4	13	48
Other	71	7	41	119

Sources: Murdock (1970); Murdock and White (1969).

ancestor of Ancestral Oceanic Society. It is important to clarify an apparent contradiction between Blust's use of sibling terms and my use of uncle terms as predictors of unilineal descent. Blust reconstructed a parity distinction in PMP sibling terms: \**naRa* 'Bws' and \**be(t)aw* 'Zms'. The same distinction (with different terms) is found in POC and PPN. In a cross-cultural study, Murdock (1968*a*) found that relative sex sibling terms are negatively associated with bilateral kindreds, positively associated with cognatic (ambilineal) descent, and positively, although not as strongly, associated with matrilineal and double descent. (Murdock, incidentally, was unable to give any explanation for this result. He reserved the right to do so at a later date but none was forthcoming.) Blust concluded from Murdock's study that early Austronesian society was "at least" ambilineal. It would appear that bifurcate merging terminology predicts unilineal descent and that relative sex sibling terminology predicts cognatic descent, but this discrepancy is due to the fact that the sample in Murdock's study was, as Murdock acknowledged, far from random. Polynesian societies, for example, were clearly overrepresented. Using Murdock and White's (1969) Standard Cross-Cultural Sample and data in Murdock's (1970) later article, "Kin Term Patterns and Their Distribution," it can be seen from Table 3 that relative sex sibling terminologies are not positively associated with cognatic descent.

Fourth, if Ancestral Oceanic Society was a "house society," it was not organized cognatically, as Kirch (1997) proposed in *The Lapita Peoples*. For Austronesianists (J. J. Fox 1993), a "house" refers to a social group identified with a dwelling. The group is often named and in possession of a landed estate and immaterial property including titles and ceremonies. Affiliation may be through birth but also through marriage or adoption. Typically, a house has "origins," often conceived in a botanical idiom, and rituals focused on ancestors.<sup>7</sup> For Oceanists, the \**Rumaq* was probably a house with some of these features. The various transformations of the Oceanic house in Polynesia and Island Melanesia, as inferred from historical linguistic and archaeological evidence, are described in Green (1998).

There are in fact many cognatic societies in Oceania that may be house societies in this sense, but they are concentrated in Polynesia, the last region to be settled. If the sample of OC-speaking societies in Murdock's (1967) *World Ethnographic Atlas* (WEA) are classified by major language subgroup, then, as shown in Table 4, the majority of societies in every subgroup other than Central Pacific (CP), and more specifically the Polynesian branch of CP, have unilineal descent groups. Cognatic societies blanket Polynesia and are relatively uncommon in Melanesia and Micronesia.

TABLE 4. THE DISTRIBUTION OF DESCENT GROUPS IN SUBGROUPS OF THE OCEANIC LANGUAGES

LANGUAGE SUBGROUPS	DESCENT GROUPS		
	UNILINEAL	COGNATIC	ABSENCE
Admiralties	2	—	—
Western Oceanic	11	2	—
Southeast Solomonian	1	—	—
Nuclear Micronesian	10	2	—
Central/North Vanuatu	3	—	—
South Vanuatu	1	—	—
New Caledonia/Loyalties	2	—	—
Central Pacific	2	15	3

Sources: Descent groups, Murdock (1967); Language groups, Pawley and Ross (1993).

TABLE 5. THE RELATION BETWEEN BIFURCATE MERGING KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY AND UNILOCAL RESIDENCE

TYPE OF KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY	UNILOCAL RESIDENCE	
	PRESENT	ABSENT
Bifurcate merging (F = FB ≠ MB)	49	5
Other	103	17

Sources: Murdock (1967); Murdock and White (1969).

Unilineal descent does not, however, preclude the possibility that Lapita was a house society. The Tikopia *paito* cited by Kirch (1997:300) as a “classic ethnographic example of the ‘house’ as a primary social group within an Oceanic speaking culture” is patrilineal with respect to descent, succession, and residence (Firth 1936). Blust (1980), in his reconstruction of PMP *\*Rumaq* lit. ‘house, domicile’ and metaphorically ‘lineage’, cited several examples from Indonesia in which reflexes of this term designate unilineal descent groups, either patrilineal or matrilineal.

Finally, if POC kinship terminology was bifurcate merging, residence was probably unilocal (Table 5). Ancestral Oceanic Society was either patrilineal and patrilocal or matrilineal and matrilocavunculocal.

RANKING AND STRATIFICATION

The evidence for ranking and social stratification in Ancestral Oceanic Society is linguistic and distributional. In POC the term *\*la(m)pat* means ‘be big or great’. Reflexes of this term include the meanings ‘genealogically senior, older’. Pawley (1982) reconstructed a pair of terms *\*qalapa(s)*, a reflex of *\*la(m)pat*, as ‘Chief’ lit. ‘Great One’ and *\*qadiki* as ‘first-born son of the chief, chief to be’. By ‘chief’ Pawley meant a hereditary leader at the head of a descent group. Lichtenberk (1986) suggested a modification of these terms and more conservative glosses:

\**tala(m)pat* ‘leader,’ lit. ‘big or great person’ and \**qadiki* ‘oldest child’. According to Lichtenberk (1986), \**tala(m)pat* could have referred either to a hereditary leader (chief) or to a ‘big man’, that is, a leader by either ascription or achievement. He argued that without additional linguistic evidence such as POC terms for ‘commoners’ or chiefly taboos and privileges, it is not possible to be specific about the form of leadership in Ancestral Oceanic Society.

Not everyone shares Lichtenberk’s agnosticism. Otto (1994) pointed out that in Baluan, a Manus language in the Admiralty Islands, the word for hereditary leader is *lapan*, a reflex of POC \**tala(m)pat*.

[*Lapan*] clearly refers to a leader of hereditary status and also has connotations of “big,” “good,” “superior” and “possessing special powers.” The word *lapan* occurs in most and perhaps all Manus languages with similar meanings. This appears to support Pawley’s position. Therefore I assume that the stress on ascribed status, which I found in contemporary Baluan ideology, has older cultural roots (Otto 1994: 226).

Bellwood (1996: 20), citing Otto, and Koskinen’s (1960) comparative study of meanings assigned to the term *ariki*, concluded that the anthropological and linguistic evidence implies the presence of hereditary leadership in Ancestral Oceanic Society.

In Titan, another Manus language (Mead 1934), the term *lapan*, similar to PPN reflexes of \**ariki*, designates a chief and also a chiefly class of persons. In Titan, *lapan* means ‘those of noble blood’ and *lau* means ‘commoners’. *Lau* connotes economic dependency and genealogical juniority applied to younger brothers and younger sons, even though “technically every son of a *lapan* is a *lapan*” (Mead 1934: 205). According to M. Ross (personal communication), Titan *lau* “seems to be from POC \**lau*, a noun meaning ‘people’ or maybe ‘commoners’ depending on your view of Proto-Oceanic social organization.”

Additional linguistic evidence for hereditary leadership in Ancestral Oceanic Society comes from Nuclear Micronesian (NM) languages in which reflexes of POC \**la(m)pat* designate ‘great’ chiefs and titles and genealogical seniority (Hage and Harary 1996). In Marshallese society, the head of a royal lineage is the *iroij labalap* ‘very big chief’, and lesser chiefs are *iroij elab* ‘big chief’ (Mason 1954). In Pohnpeian, *lap* appears in numerous chiefly titles, for example *Nahmid Lapalap* ‘Great Lord of the Eel’ (Riesenberg 1968). In Woleai, *tame-lap* lit. ‘great father’ designates the eldest male of a family (Pawley 1982). In Lamotrek, *malalap* denotes a senior representative of a matrilineal conical clan (Alkire 1965), who, in an interesting parallel to the position of the father’s sister in Tonga (Rivers 1910), has the right to arrange or veto marriages of junior lineage members.

Even more generally, in some Southeast Solomonic and Nuclear Micronesian languages, there are cognate terms for ‘commoner’. In Sa’a (Malaita) *mwala* means ‘people, commoners as opposed to chief’, and in Pohnpeian *mwahl* means ‘common, useless’ and *aramas mwahl*, ‘commoner’ (Blust 1981). In Blust’s view (personal communication) “this points to a very early, perhaps POC term \**mwala* ‘commoner’.”

In terms of distribution, hereditary leadership is found in societies belonging to every major subgroup of the OC language family. Chiefdoms are pervasive in the Admiralty Islands (Mead 1934) and are highly developed in the Marshall Islands and Pohnpei, in eastern Micronesia (the genetic center of the NM languages),



and in Tonga and Fiji (Bott 1982; Gifford 1929; Sayes 1984). Chiefdoms are also found in Manam and the Trobriands, whose languages are Western Oceanic (Malinowski 1932; Wedgwood 1934), in Vanuatu (Facey 1981; Humphreys 1926), and throughout New Caledonia (Douglas 1979; Guiart 1963). They are known in the southeast Solomons, for example in Arosi (C. E. Fox 1924), where the terms for 'chief' *ari'i* and 'eldest son of a chief' *araha*, led to Pawley's POC reconstructions.

In many of these societies, including those in Tonga, Fiji, New Caledonia, the Marshalls, and Pohnpei, not only does an institution of hereditary leadership exist, but there is also a distinction between senior and junior lines of descent. This distinction is diagnostic of a type of descent group known as the "conical clan" (Kirchhoff 1959[1955]). The conical clan has been independently discovered on numerous occasions (Hage and Harary 1996; Service 1985) and is referred to or described variously in Oceania studies as the lineage in Tonga (Gifford 1929), the clan in the Marshalls (Mason 1954), pyramidal descent groups in Fiji (Sayes 1984), descent groups structured by genealogical seniority in New Caledonia (Douglas 1979), and the ramage in Polynesia (Firth 1936; Sahlins 1958). From the standpoint of internal ranking there are, as Kirchhoff (1959[1955]) emphasized, basically two types of descent groups: the (egalitarian) clan and the conical clan. In the conical clan all individuals and all descent lines theoretically have unique ranks. This ranking is generated by a rule of unigeniture, primogeniture in the Oceanic case, which distinguishes elder siblings from younger siblings—elder brothers from younger brothers in patrilineal Polynesia (Gifford 1929) and elder sisters from younger sisters in matrilineal Micronesia (Mason 1954; Peterson 1982)—and descendants of elder and younger siblings. Primogeniture is reflected in the seniority distinction in POC sibling terminology and more emphatically in the marked status of the term for elder (parallel) sibling. In a number of OC terminologies, e.g., Fijian, the term for younger (parallel) sibling can be used generically to mean sibling irrespective of age (or sex) while the term for elder (parallel) sibling can only have this specific meaning, reflecting the special, elevated, position of this relation (Hage 1999). Titles are passed down the senior lines, and members of more senior lines form an upper, chiefly class while members of more junior lines form a lower, commoner class, for example *'eiki* (< PPN *\*ariki*) and *tua* as in Tonga, *iroij* and *kajur* as in the Marshall Islands, and *lapan* (< POC *\*la(m)pat*) and *lau* as in the Admiralties. Senior lines, by virtue of their descent from deified ancestors, have a sacred exalted status while junior lines have a progressively diminished status as a result of their genealogical displacement downward. In J. J. Fox's (1995) evocative phrase, the conical clan is a system of "apical demotion" (p. 223).

The conical clan figures explicitly and implicitly in two prominent models of Oceanic social organization. In Kirch's (1984) model of Ancestral Polynesian Society, the hierarchical structure of the conical clan facilitated the political integration of an expanding, colonizing society:

Inherently segmentary and expansionistic, such a structure is well-suited to a kind of "radiation" into all of the primary ecological zones of an island. Despite this tendency, the pyramidal geometry of the conical clan allows the segmentary branches to retain their genealogical interrelations, thus facilitating the amalgamation of large political units under the leadership of a ranking chief (Kirch 1984 : 66).

Integration of an expanding society through genealogical seniority was also the feature emphasized by Firth (1936) in his independent discovery of the conical clan (*ramage*) in Polynesia.

In Bellwood's (1996) model of a "founder-focused ideology," the genealogical demotion of junior collaterals provided the social motivation for the rapid and extensive Oceanic and more generally Malayo-Polynesian expansion. Junior members of a hierarchically structured descent group (in our terms, the conical clan) moved into new territories where they established themselves as heads of senior lines, aggrandized their resources, and justified the superior genealogical status and privileges of their descendants by claiming to be founders of kinship groups. Ethnographically, the emigration of junior collaterals is a solution to the problem of unigeniture in two well-known conical clan societies: Tonga in Western Polynesia (Bott 1982; Kirch 1984) and Kachin in Burma (Leach 1954).

My conjecture is that the conical clan provided the framework for a stratified Ancestral Oceanic Society. From this point of view, the "degraded" chiefdoms so often remarked on by ethnographers working in the OC-speaking societies of Melanesia (Jolly 1991; Layard 1942; Mead 1934; Wedgwood 1934) are those in which the distinctions between senior and junior lines and chiefly and commoner classes became attenuated or lost, leaving only an institution of primogeniture with leadership dependent on achievement as well as ascription. In Manus, for example, "the inheritance of rank is . . . dependent upon ability. A man inherits *lapan* blood; he must be rich and energetic if he would openly parade the privilege of a *lapan*" (Mead 1934:315). Conversely, in stratified societies where those at the top severed their kinship connections to those at the bottom, primogeniture, as Sahlins (1985) has said of Hawai'i, became only one "argument" in laying claim to high status. In Hawai'i, traces of the conical clan remain in the "royal cum cosmological genealogies which, beginning in divine sources and proceeding patrilineally through senior and cadet branches, fix the dynastic relations between the several islands" (Sahlins 1985:20). But claims to high status could also be made on the basis of alternative bilateral tracings of descent and the number of connections to an ancient ruling line.

#### MARRIAGE ALLIANCE

Early Austronesian kinship terminology as reconstructed by Blust (1980) has some affinal-consanguineal equations that imply a marriage system based on generalized exchange: PMP *\*ma(n)tuqa* 'MB/WF', *\*dawa* 'ZS/DH (ms)', *\*laya* 'FZS/ZH (ms)', and PAN *\*aya* 'FZ' ≠ WM'. Three of the four terms are reflected in OC languages, but not always with the stated equations: POC *\*matuqa* 'MB', *\*lawā* 'ZCms', and *\*aya* probably 'FZ'. Given that POC terms do not have the affinal-consanguineal equations of PMP terms, the evidence for generalized exchange in Ancestral Oceanic Society can only be ethnographic and distributional. A few definitions are needed.

In Lévi-Strauss' (1969) theory of kinship, *elementary structures* are those that have a positive rule prescribing the choice of spouse. This results in determinate alliances between wife-exchanging groups. Elementary structures include restricted exchange and generalized exchange. Restricted exchange is a symmetric relationship joining pairs of groups (lineages, clans, houses, sections) to each other

as wife-givers and wife-takers. It is expressed in bilateral cross-cousin marriage. In the case of first cousins, marriage is with the MBD = FZD. Generalized exchange is an asymmetric relationship in which wife-givers are distinguished from wife-takers. At the "continuous" pole of generalized exchange, marriage is with the matrilineal cross-cousin, prototypically the MBD, and the direction of exchange is consistent in every generation. In the simplest case, A is a wife-giver to B, B is a wife-giver to C, and C is a wife-giver to A. At the "discontinuous" pole, marriage is with the patrilineal cross-cousin, prototypically the FZD, and the direction of exchange is reversed in every generation. In the simplest case, A gives a woman to B in one generation and receives a woman from B in the next generation. Matrilineal marriage, which is sometimes equated with generalized exchange, is "speculative," based on the expectation that a cycle of exchange once opened will eventually be closed, providing everyone with a wife. Patrilineal marriage, on the other hand, is "conservative," based on the guarantee that a woman given in one generation will be reciprocated in the next generation. Patrilineal marriage is always a latent possibility, and "temptation" in a matrilineal system and may eventually undermine it completely. *Complex structures*, in contrast to elementary structures, have only a negative rule prohibiting close marriages, for example between all first or second or more distant cousins.

In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Lévi-Strauss defined a "Sino-Tibetan axis of generalized exchange" (matrilineal marriage) running from eastern Siberia to western Burma. On one side of this axis are western and southern Asia. On the other side lies the Austronesian world, where forms of generalized exchange continue as far east as Fiji. Melanesia is described as

a "sort of fault" of generalized exchange, the significance of which seems even greater when it is noted that it borders that wide zone of the breakdown of [elementary] kinship structures which is the Polynesian world. The whole eastern area, the "Oceanic-American" area as it might be called, thus forms a sort of theatre in which restricted and generalized exchange meet each other, sometimes in conflict, sometimes in harmony (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 466).

Within Melanesia Lévi-Strauss discerned a growing incidence of patrilineality accompanying the decline of matrilineal marriage.

Not all anthropologists would agree with Lévi-Strauss' characterization of marriage alliance in Melanesia. Oliver (1989), in his encyclopaedic work on the cultures of Oceania, gave the impression that marriage in Melanesia is, in Lévi-Strauss' terms, predominantly complex rather than elementary, concerned with prohibitions rather than preferences.

In most of the region's [i.e., Melanesia's] societies (including most of those containing unilineal descent units) marriage was prohibited bilaterally within at least two, and in many cases, three degrees of kinship (e.g., with anyone closer than third cousins). The most notable exceptions to this rule occurred in certain unilineal societies, where marriage with an actual (first) cross-cousin was highly preferred (Oliver 1989: 1094).

The reason for this impression is that generalized exchange in Melanesia often assumes complex forms that, with a few notable exceptions, for example Eyde (1983) and Kelly (1968), have gone unrecognized. Thus an ethnographer may report a preference, say, for marriage with the FMBSD without putting this pref-

erence in the context of a marriage system in which members of every lineage or clan ideally marry in this way. In complex as opposed to simple forms of generalized exchange based on marriage with specified second or more distant cousins, alliances are not repeated in successive generations, but in alternate or more widely separated generations. The periodicity of such systems is not one, but two or three or greater. Models for these systems are not widely known and until recently have not been systematically studied and enumerated (Tjon Sie Fat 1981, 1990). It sometimes happens, as in Sahlins' (1976) analysis of marriage alliance in Moala, Fiji, that a complex system of generalized exchange is modeled as an Aranda system, a type known to everyone, even though sister exchange is prohibited and exchange is asymmetric. Complex systems of generalized exchange are also difficult to recognize because they are generally not reflected in the kinship terminology. In Moala, for example, which has a Dravidian terminology (Groves 1963), the same terms are used for first and second cousins, but the former are prohibited as spouses while certain types of the latter are preferred. In general, as Tjon Sie Fat (1990: 13) has shown, "there is no association between Iroquois or Dravidian compatibility and other features of the kinship structure (descent, marriage rule, periodicity, etc.). Only the ... structures [which allow marriage with first cousins—MBD or FZD] are consistently Dravidian compatible (for any number of lines greater than three)." To add to these difficulties, there are "hybrid" systems that combine different marriage rules.

An indication of the prevalence and widespread distribution of elementary structures in Melanesia, including both restricted and generalized exchange, can be given by classifying cousin marriage in the OC-speaking societies in the WEA into two types: elementary structures defined by marriage with a specified first or second cross-cousin (e.g., MBD or FMBSD), and complex structures defined by the prohibition of marriage with all first and second cousins or, conversely, the allowance of marriage with any unspecified first or second cousin. There are two reasons for using this dichotomous classification. The first is that the coding of marriage systems in the WEA in terms of a particular type of second cousin may not be sufficient to distinguish between systems of restricted and generalized exchange. In Moala, for example, marriage is preferred with the FMBSD = MMBDD, which are *two* of the four marriageable kintypes of an Aranda system. This is why Sahlins (1976) tried to model Moala as an Aranda system even though, as he made clear, there was a lack of fit between them. The second is that systems of generalized exchange may change, sometimes imperceptibly, into systems of restricted exchange (Josselin de Jong 1966). Elementary structures are found in societies belonging to every major subgroup of the OC language family

TABLE 6. ELEMENTARY AND COMPLEX STRUCTURES IN OCEANIC-SPEAKING SOCIETIES IN MELANESIA AND POLYNESIA

TYPE OF KINSHIP STRUCTURE	REGION		TOTAL
	MELANESIA	POLYNESIA	
Elementary structures	11	1	12
Complex structures	6	16	22

Source: Murdock (1967).

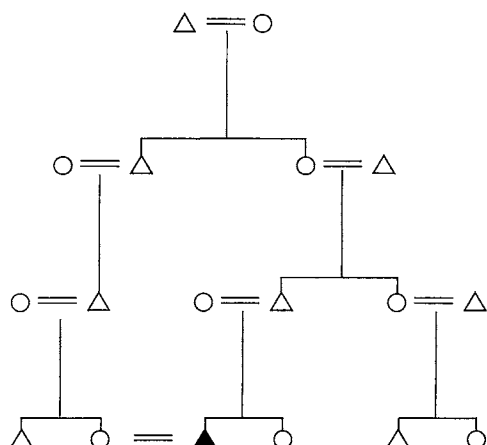


Fig. 3. Mead's (1936) "diagram showing the prescribed marriage" in Manus.

and, as shown in Table 5, they outnumber complex structures in Island Melanesia by almost two to one.<sup>8</sup> They virtually disappear in the Polynesian branch of Central Pacific, "the zone of the breakdown of [elementary] kinship structures" (Levi-Strauss 1969:466). There are many other Island Melanesian societies, especially in Vanuatu and the Bismarcks, not listed in the WEA that have elementary marriage systems, for example, Ambrym (Deacon 1927), Tismulun (Lane 1962), Vao (Layard 1942), East Ambae and Pentecost (M. R. Allen 1964), Motlav (Vienne 1984), Aneityum (Humphreys 1926), West Futuna-Aniwa (Dougherty 1983), Matupit (Epstein 1964), Karavar (Errington (1974), Usen Barok (Wagner 1986), and Mandak (Clay 1977), among others. Many societies in Fiji have some form of first or second cross-cousin marriage (Capell and Lester 1945). Although it cannot be proved without linguistic evidence, the density of elementary structures in Island Melanesia argues for their historical continuity rather than for their convergent development.

In order to show what complex forms of generalized exchange in Melanesia look like, two prototypic examples may be given. The first example, from Manus, represents the continuous pole of generalized exchange. According to Mead (1934), the ideal marriage in Manus and throughout the Admiralty Islands is with the FMBSD, as shown in Figure 3. In Manus conception, this is a marriage between the children of cross-cousins: between the son of *lom pein*, the cross-cousin of the female line, and the daughter of *lom kamal*, the cross-cousin of the male line. These marriages, accompanied by substantial payments, are asymmetric: the daughter of *lom pein* cannot marry the son of *lom kamal*. Thus:

the father of the bride stands in a [*lom pein*] relationship to his mother's brother's son from whom he would be demanding a daughter in marriage to his son. When his cross-cousin on his father's side paid him the betrothal payment for his daughter, he would take this same betrothal payment and pass it on to his cross-cousin on his mother's side. The return payment on the part of the bride's relatives would move in a reverse direction (Mead 1934:318).

The marriage system must obviously be circular, so that men of every patriline can obtain a wife, and nonconsecutive, because the prescribed spouse is a second cousin. A model of the Manus system, adapted from an abstract one in Tjon Sie

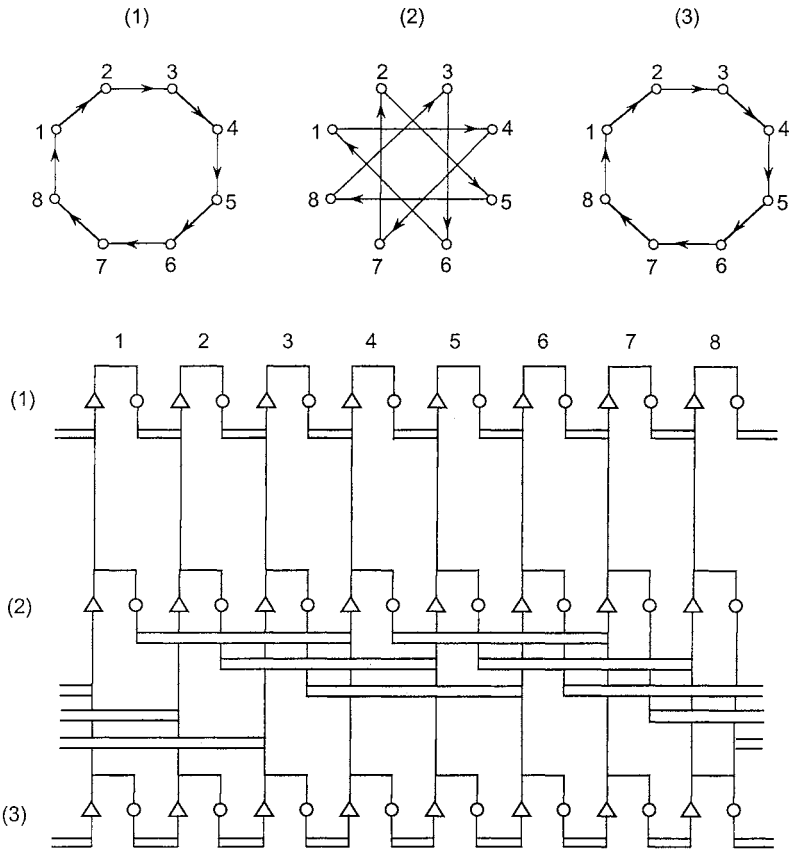


Fig. 4. FMBSD marriage (after Tjon Sie Fat 1990). The nos. 1–8 refer to eight intermarrying patrilineal groups; the nos. (1)–(3) refer to marriages in three successive generations.

Fat (1990), is shown in Figure 4. The model has eight intermarrying patrilineal groups. Genealogical relations are shown at the bottom of Figure 4 and marriage cycles at the top. In FMBSD marriage, ego marries in the same way as his FF. Marriages are repeated in alternate generations so that the period of the Manus system is two.

Two notable features of the Manus system have parallels with other Austronesian and southern Asian systems of generalized exchange. The first feature is the designation of wife-givers as *lom kamal* and wife-takers as *lom pein*. The meaning of *lom* is unknown, but according to Blust (personal communication) *pein* and *kamal* are 'female' and 'male' respectively. *Pein* is a reflex of PMP *\*ba-b-in-ahi* 'female, woman' and *kamal* of PMP *\*kamaliR*. The PMP meaning of the latter term is unclear, but in POC it meant 'men's house', and in the languages of the Admiralty Islands it has this meaning and also the general sense of 'male, man'. The designation of wife-givers and wife-takers as 'male' and 'female' is part of a larger Austronesian pattern in which parties to a marriage exchange are associated with sexual oppositions. Blust (1993b) has drawn attention to this pattern in connection with "cross-sibling substitution drifts" in AN languages. By "drifts," Blust referred to a process in which terms for male/female and child + male/female,

which originally applied to wife-giving and wife-taking groups, were later applied to cross-siblings, replacing the reflexes of PMP \**naRa* = Bws and \**betaw* = Zms. It is inferred that at the time of replacement the societies in question practiced matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. Another Oceanic example of this type of symbolism comes from the Marshall Islands in Micronesia, where there was once a chiefly system of generalized exchange (Hage 1998b; Hage and Harary 1996). In Marshallese the term for ZH was 'big father', *jema lallab* (< POC \**tama* 'F' and \**la(m)pat* 'big') and for WB 'male child' *nāju mōmaan* (< POC \**latu* 'child' and \**tam*<sup>w</sup>*ane* 'male') (Bender personal communication; Rynkiewicz 1972).

The second feature is the special position of the FZ. In Manus, descent is patrilineal and residence is patrilocal. There is, however, a recognition of the FZ's line (*pinapu*) and its exercise of spiritual power over the male line. The FZ and her female descendants can invoke lines of female ghosts for or against the interests of the male line.

These ... ghostly lines are invoked at all crises rites; it is through them that individuals are endowed with health, wealth and power, that women are dowered with domestic virtues, and men with warlike prowess. Most importantly, on these ghostly lines, as invoked by their female descendants, rests the power of giving or withholding conception to the women of the male lines, and to a less extent, to the wives of the men of the male line also. By this arrangement the control of offspring in the inheriting line is in the power of the disinherited line (Mead 1934: 308).

Similar beliefs, as Mead observed, are found in many other Oceanic societies, including Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Tikopia. Rivers (1910, 1914) interpreted such customs, including the right of the FZ to arrange or veto the marriages of her BC, as a survival of the transition from matriliney to patriliney. Later commentators have interpreted them in various ways: as an inherent property of the B-Z relationship and as an expression of an ancestral ghost cult, as in Manus (Mead 1934); as a form of security for the sister's children, as in Tikopia (Firth 1936); as a means of checking chiefly power in patrilineages, as in Tonga (Rogers 1977); and as an expression of a sociocosmological complex, also in Tonga (Douaire-Marsaudon 1996).

Another interpretation may be given. Lévi-Strauss (1969) noted that in most southern Asian systems of generalized exchange there is a contrast between the role of MB as protector and dominator of his niece and that of the FZ as an essential ceremonial and sometimes economic participant in the marriage of her brother's children. He interpreted the complementary role of the FZ not only as an indication of tension between masculine and feminine lineages but also as an expression of a woman's perspective on a system of generalized exchange:

There is certainly no necessity, or even excuse, for treating these peculiarities as matrilineal survivals. But do they not express a sort of female reaction to, or viewpoint on, the system taken as a whole? These patrilineal and patrilocal regimes, which condemn women to the hard fate of exile, theoretically for ever, in foreign households, often different in language and customs, do not exclude, however, a certain solidarity in the female line; perhaps they are even the cause of it (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 306).

The "spiritual predominance of the sister" in Oceanic societies might then be interpreted along the lines suggested by Mabuchi (1960: 57) as a correlate of a system or former system of generalized exchange.

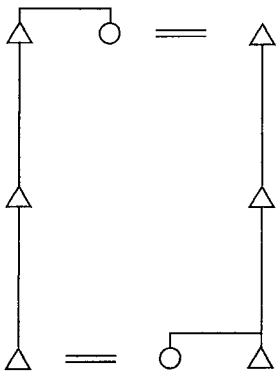


Fig. 5. FFZSD marriage in Manam (Wedgwood 1934).

The second example of a complex form of generalized exchange is from Manam, a Western Oceanic (WOC)-speaking society in the Schouten Islands off the north coast of New Guinea. Manam represents the discontinuous pole of generalized exchange, complex forms of which are derivatives of marriage with the FZD. Only a bare outline of Manam social organization is available, but according to Wedgwood (1934, 1959) descent is patrilineal, residence is patrilocal, and leadership is hereditary and based on a rule of primogeniture. The village chief, *tanepwa labalaba* 'big chief', who formerly had substantial judicial powers and economic prerogatives, is the "senior descendant in the male line of the original founder of the village" (Wedgwood 1934:383). The chief's sons and his younger brothers and their sons are of *tanepwa* rank and are called *tanepwa si'isi'i* 'little chief'. *Labalaba* is from POC *\*la(m)pat* 'big' and *si'isi'i* is from POC *\*diki* (or *\*siki*) 'small' (Lichtenberk, personal communication). There is a marked preference for marriage between chiefly families. Otherwise, clans are exogamous and first-cousin marriage is prohibited. The ideal marriage is with the FFZSD, especially if she belongs to a different village: "through such unions a woman returns to her paternal grandmother's village and takes up the cultivation of this woman's garden land" (Wedgwood 1934:388). This ideal marriage is shown in Figure 5, and a model of the system, adapted from van Dijk and de Jonge's (1987) model of marriage in Babar, an AN-speaking society in the southeast Moluccas, is shown in Figure 6. In FFZSD marriage, ego marries in the same way as his FFFF. Therefore, alliances are repeated in generations one and five. The period of the Manam system is four.

The same model would apply to the ideal marriage in Wogeo, another WOC-speaking society in the Schouten Islands (Hogbin 1970). The rationale for FFZSD marriage in Wogeo is similar to that in Manam: a girl returns to the family from which her grandmother came, in this case returning dowry land to its original owners. In Wogeo, the preference for this marriage stresses genealogical seniority: the eldest son should marry the father's father's eldest sister's eldest son's eldest daughter.

#### ETHNOGRAPHIC TEST OF THE PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION

In my reconstruction of Ancestral Oceanic Society, descent was unilineal. Kinship terminology was bifurcate merging for +1 males and possibly for +1 females as



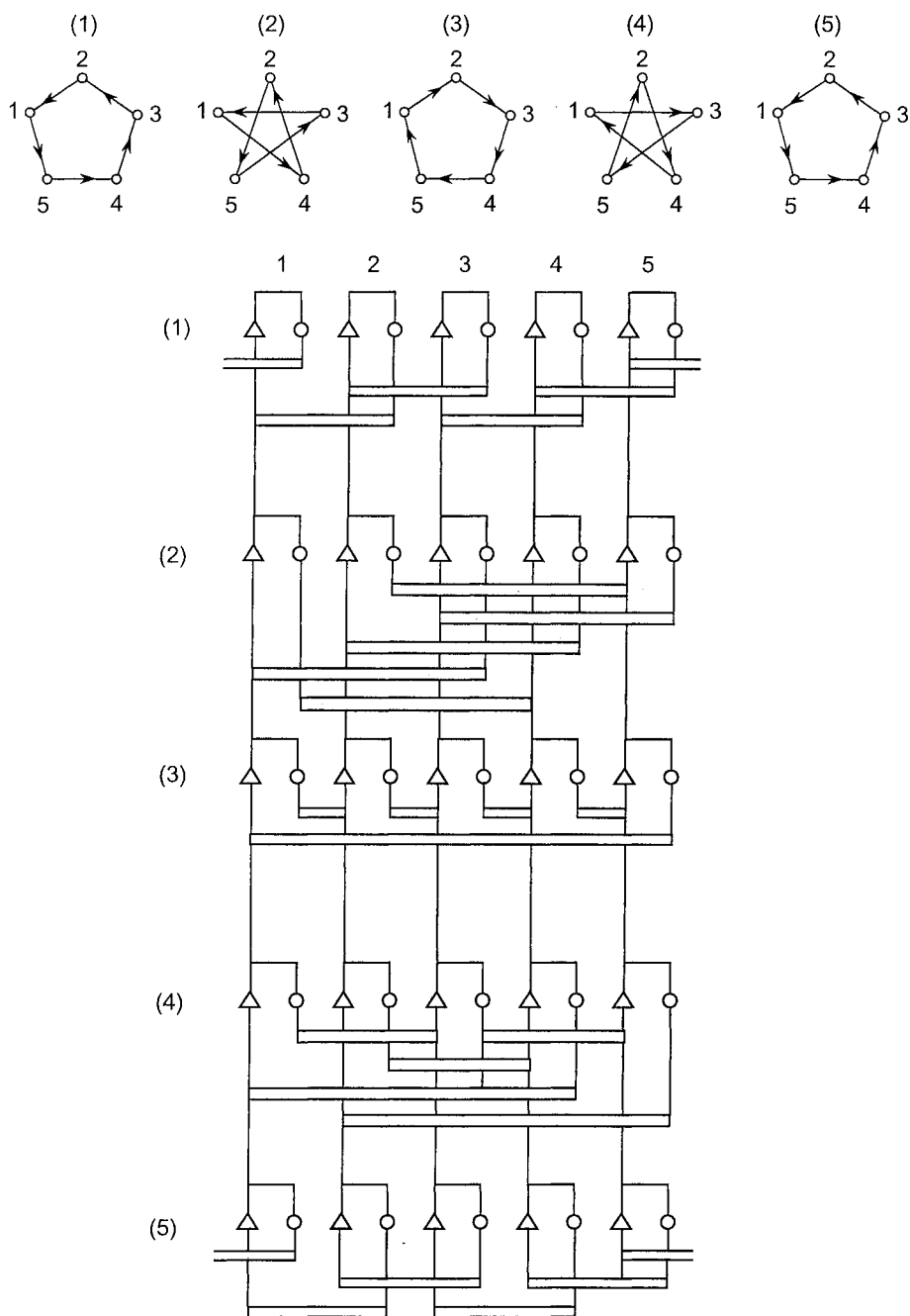


Fig. 6. FFZSD marriage (after van Dijk and de Jonge 1987). The nos. 1–5 refer to five intermarrying patriline; the nos. (1)–(5) refer to marriages in five successive generations.

well. Descent groups took the form of a conical clan with a distinction between senior and junior lines of descent. Leadership was hereditary, based on a rule of primogeniture. Chiefs held an exalted sacred status by virtue of their direct descent from deified ancestors. Marriage was ideally based on a system of generalized exchange. This reconstruction may now be compared with the social organization of Baegu, the Melanesian community Green and Pawley (1999) used as an ethnographic guideline in their archaeological and linguistic study of early Oceanic house architecture and settlement patterns.

Baegu is located in Malaita in the southeast Solomon Islands (Ross 1973). Green and Pawley's choice of Baegu as an Oceanic prototype was not arbitrary:

In his overview of domicile arrangements in Island Melanesia, Oliver (1989:33) chose a community of the Austronesian-speaking Baegu to "typify, substantively, hundreds of Island Melanesia's thousands of communities.... Given his extensive ethnographic knowledge of the region, and his objective of setting up a model to characterize most communities in it, the selection of Baegu is presumably intentional and is appropriate as a general ethnographic guideline (Green and Pawley 1999:47).

Baegu kinship terminology is similar to that of POC, with bifurcate merging terms for +1 relations, *maa* (F, FB), *kokoo* (MB), *gaa* (M, MZ), *aya* (FZ), and relative sex and seniority distinctions in terms for siblings, *sauana* (essG), *sasina* (yssG), *waiwane* (osG). *Sauna* is derived from POC \**tuqaka* (essG), *sasina* from POC \**taji* (or *tansi*) (yssG), and *waiwane* from POC *m<sup>w</sup>aqane* (Bws); *aya* may be derived from POC \**aya* (FZ) (R. Blust, J. Finney, personal communications). Baegu cousin terminology, however, is Iroquois (G = PssGC ≠ PosGC).

According to Ross, Baegu descent groups are patrilineal and landowning.

The Baegu recognize named patrilineal descent groups, called '*ae bara*, meaning the base or stem of the family. Membership in these descent groups is almost without exception on the basis of patrilineal descent (children automatically belong to their father's '*ae bara*') and is unambiguous. Patrilineal descent groups are theologically custodians of the land. Land is sacred to the ancestors (who are buried there), and men are reverent toward the land because it gives them their living. It is only fitting, as the Baegu see it, that those who are properly descended (that is, agnatically) should have the stewardship of the land and the responsibility for maintaining its fertility by honoring the ancestors (Ross 1973:138).

As J. J. Fox (1995) has shown, the use of a botanical metaphor to describe social origins is a common, possibly *ur*-Austronesian practice:

In many Austronesian societies, origins are conceptualized as a form of growth: derivation from a 'source,' 'root,' 'base' or 'trunk'.... The Rotinese use this metaphor to describe their maternal origins as well as the structure of their clans; other populations in eastern Indonesia such as the Wewewa of Sumba, the Mambai of East Timor or the Atoni of West Timor use a similar metaphor to describe 'origin structures of varying sorts' (Fox 1971, 1980, 1988; Kuipers 1985; McWilliam 1990; Traube 1989). The central Polynesians use the same metaphor to trace origins among different island populations; the Satawal of Micronesia to identify the matrilineal source clans on their island of origin (Siikala [1996]; Sudo [1996]) (J. J. Fox 1995:218).

The Baegu clan is conical in form, with a (largely ritual) distinction between senior and junior lines: "Within limits birth order establishes seniority within a line of descent. Other things being equal, an elder son of a line descended from an elder brother will outrank his siblings and cousins" (Ross 1973:140).

Residence in Baegu is patrilocal: "a woman moves to her husband's father's hamlet" (Ross 1973: 153).

Hereditary leaders, *wane initoo*, succeed by a rule of primogeniture and stand at the head of land-owning descent groups. Effective leadership, however, depends on achievement as well as ascription: on "individual wealth, talent and aggressiveness" (Ross 1973: 140). There are also informal neighborhood leaders, *wane baita* 'big men' who have considerable economic and political power. Hereditary leaders, however, occupy an especially favorable position because of their direct descent from sacred ancestors, and the term for 'hereditary leader', *wane initoo*, can be used metaphorically to refer to nonhereditary leaders.

Because of [their] genealogical position, their direct descent from the ancestors, and their titular role in granting permission for land use, *wane initoo* are inherently already in a strategically valuable focal position and can easily turn this favorable sociocentric status into a means of attaining economic and executive power that goes far beyond the direct prerequisites of office. The Baegu recognize intuitively the dynamics of leadership and the status potential involved, and they sometimes by metaphor call other (nonhereditary) important men *wane initoo* too (Ross 1973: 189).

In other words, the concept of hereditary leader is prototypic and unmarked.

There is an interesting feature of Baegu social organization with respect to the hypothesis that Ancestral Oceanic Society was a "house society." In Baegu, the term *luma*, a reflex of PMP \**Rumaq* 'house, dwelling' (Blust 1980) means 'house or dwelling place', but as a kinship metaphor it does not designate one's own descent group as the term *paito* does in Tikopia (Firth 1936). Instead, it refers to the "collective body of a wife's consanguineal kinsmen."

For a male ego, these are the people who are affinally related to him by the marital alliance of two kindreds, his own and his bride's. *Luma* is fairly obviously cognate with the northern Malaitan word *luma*, which means women's family or dwelling house. In the Tikopia case, the "house" reference involves descent or consanguineal kinship, while in the Malaitan one affinity (Ross 1973: 120).

That is to say, the "house" term in Baegu refers to ego's wife-givers. The metaphorical use of the house term for a social group in Baegu may reflect an ancient Proto-Malayo-Polynesian practice as reconstructed by Blust (1980).

Although it is not a prescription or rule, the preferred marriage in Baegu is with the FZD. The rationale is the reciprocation of a marriage payment: "We bought one of their girls; now they ought to buy one of ours" (Ross 1973: 149). In our terms, this is a simple discontinuous system of generalized exchange, which Ross represented by the conventional type of diagram, which is Figure 7.

In many of the classic elementary marriage systems, such as Kachin (Leach 1954) for example, a marriage preference may not apply to all members of a descent group but to only certain members, or to at least one member. This is the case in Baegu, as Ross indicated in an analysis of mother-daughter comparisons.

In families from my sample population where there were mature married daughters and where I had complete census and genealogical data, there was a marked tendency for at least one of the daughters to marry back into her mother's group. Thus if descent group X pays a bride-price to descent group Y for one of their girls, one of the daughters resulting from this union is apt to marry (in time) a young man of descent group Y, with the direction for bride-price payment in this second generation reversing, now going from group Y back to group X (Ross 1973: 150).

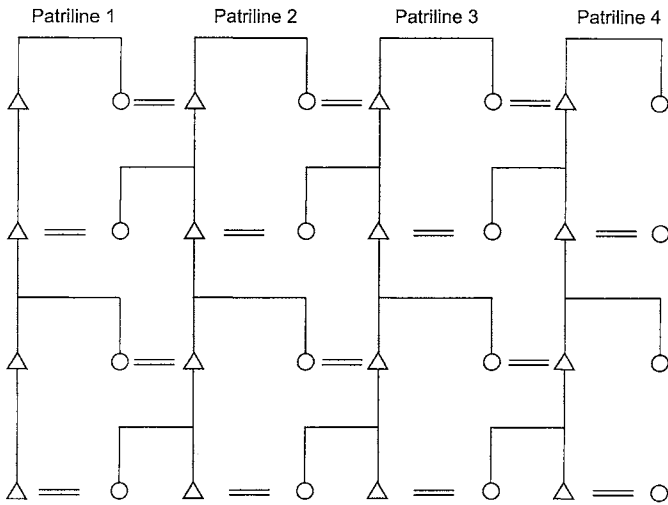


Fig. 7. H. M. Ross (1973) diagram of patrilineal cross-cousin marriage in Baegu.

To summarize, Baegu social organization is characterized by a bifurcate merging kinship terminology, unilineal descent groups, a conical clan based on the distinction between senior and junior lines of descent, hereditary leaders who by virtue of their genealogical position have a close association with ancestral spirits, and a preference for a patrilineal, discontinuous form of generalized exchange. This is a rather good match for the reconstruction of Ancestral Oceanic social organization proposed in this article.

#### CONCLUSION

On the basis of historical linguistic, comparative ethnological, and cross-cultural evidence, the following conclusions have been reached regarding Ancestral Oceanic social organization.

The bifurcate merging feature of POC kinship terminology ( $F = FB \neq MB$ ) implies that 'land-holding descent groups' *\*kainanga*, were unilineal. Cognatic descent groups, which predominate in Polynesia, the last region of Oceanic settlement, were a later development. Since PMP, POC, and PPN terminologies all share the same bifurcate merging feature, the kinship systems of these three societies are continuous with respect to unilineal descent and unilocal residence.

Comparative ethnological data and reflexes of the POC term *\*tala(m)pat* imply that leadership was hereditary, based on a rule of primogeniture. The conical clan, which merely follows out the logical implications of primogeniture by distinguishing between senior and junior lines of descent, provided the framework for Ancestral Oceanic social stratification and a motive for the rapid Oceanic and Malayo-Polynesian expansion. The degraded chiefdoms of Melanesia are those in which distinctions between senior and junior lines, and hence chiefly and commoner classes, became attenuated or lost, with leadership dependent on a combination of ascription and achievement. Alternative explanations for the breakdown of hereditary leadership in Melanesia, as reviewed by Spriggs (1997) include: trade network contraction and specialization (J. Allen 1985), local adaptation and

weakening of network ties (Pawley 1981), sociopolitical transformation (Friedman 1981), and absorption and secondary migration. The stratified class societies of Polynesia, such as Hawai'i, are those in which primogeniture became one among several arguments in laying claim to high rank.

The predominance of elementary over complex marriage systems in Melanesia and their virtual absence in Polynesia suggest that marriage in Ancestral Oceanic Society was based on generalized exchange of either a continuous (matrilateral) or discontinuous (patrilateral) type. The system may have been simple, with marriage between first cross-cousins—MBD as in New Caledonia or FZD as in Baegu—or complex, with marriage between second (or more distant) cross-cousins—FMBS as in Manus or FFZSD as in Manam. Further research will undoubtedly reveal many other complex systems of generalized exchange. It may also reveal, as Lévi-Strauss (1969) said of Fiji, a growing tendency toward conservative patrilateral forms of marriage away from more “speculative” matrilateral forms.

These conclusions are plausible and far from premature. Bifurcate merging kinship terms, as Rivers (1914) perceived, and as Murdock (1947) demonstrated, imply the presence of unilineal descent groups. It only remains to be determined whether Proto-Oceanic Society was matrilineal or patrilineal. (Comparative ethnographic and historical linguistic evidence suggests the former [Hage 1998c].) If Pawley (1982) is right, as some anthropologists and archaeologists believe, such as Bellwood (1996), Otto (1994), and Spriggs (1986), POC had a term meaning ‘hereditary chief standing at the head of a descent group’. In Oceanic societies, chiefs generally succeed by a rule of primogeniture. Such a rule is reflected in the presence of a seniority distinction in POC sibling terminology (Table 1) and in the marked status of the term for elder sibling (Hage 1999). The logical implication of a rule of primogeniture is a distinction between senior and junior lines of descent. This distinction is a diagnostic of the conical clan, however anthropologists may choose to call it. The designation of particular types of cross-cousins as marriageable implies an elementary system. The presence of generalized exchange in Ancestral Oceanic Society and in many Melanesian societies is intelligible as a continuation and development of generalized exchange in Austronesian society, as hypothesized by Lévi-Strauss (1969) and as reconstructed linguistically by Blust (1980). The proposed reconstruction is consistent with Friedman's (1981) influential prestige-good system model of early Oceanic social organization (Green and Kirch 1997; Hage and Harary 1996; Kirch 1984, 1988; Liep 1991; Spriggs 1986, 1997), which incorporates the twin ideas of generalized exchange and genealogical seniority (the conical clan). It is also consistent with technological arguments that a sophisticated overseas voyaging technology implies a ranked or stratified society (Hayden 1978; Stillfried 1953). And it matches, in general outline, that of the ethnographic prototype used in Green and Pawley's (1999) reconstruction of early Oceanic house architecture and settlement patterns.

#### POSTSCRIPTUM

The views in this paper follow Green and Pawley (1999) and Kirch (1997) in that they reconstruct Ancestral Oceanic Society as a “triangulation” of archaeological, historical linguistic, and comparative ethnography. It has been suggested that this method of reconstruction is rejected by some archaeologists because it is not understood.

Some prehistorians evidently find the methods of historical linguistics so arcane or the idea of such detailed lexical reconstructions so incredible, that they prefer to ignore or discount the reconstructions as irrelevant to prehistory. This attitude is no more excusable than that of a linguist who would ignore C<sup>14</sup> dates for artifact assemblages because he does not understand how such dates are arrived at or who would discount the relative dating of assemblages in any archaeological site on the suspicion that worms, humans or earthquakes have disturbed the layers (Pawley and Ross 1995: 48–9).

Other archaeologists, and some anthropologists as well, have strong reservations regarding the application of historical linguistics to social relations as opposed to material culture. Sutton (1990: 668) argued that protollexemes for kin terms, social groups, and social statuses can define only “axes of descent, filiation, age, gender and achievement,” not specific meanings. But kin terms are highly paradigmatic. With the exception of a term for FZ, there does not seem to be any basic disagreement about the primary genealogical referents of POC kin terms (Table 1). On the basis of these kin terms and cross-cultural evidence, it is possible to make legitimate inferences about probable features of Ancestral Oceanic Society. The meaning of certain other protollexemes may be more difficult, but it is not impossible, as Green (1994) has shown in the case of PPN \**qariki* ‘chief’.

Some anthropologists reject historical linguistics in favor of purely typological approaches to culture history. In a well-known study, Marshall (1984) attempted to infer the genetic (historical) relationships between sibling terminologies in Island Oceania solely on the basis of their numerical frequency and geographical distribution. But as linguists were quick to point out, there is no way to reconstruct protokinship terminologies except by using the comparative method of historical linguistics.

To date, major advances in the study of Oceanic culture history have come from archaeologists and linguists. Green and Pawley (1999) have demonstrated how archaeological and historical linguistic data can be integrated into the reconstruction of Ancestral Oceanic Society. My purpose, as an anthropologist, is to fill in the ethnographic picture.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Nick Allen, Robert Blust, Michael Graves, Roger Green, Patrick Kirch, and Kris Lehman for their most helpful comments on this paper. Responsibility is, of course, solely my own.

#### NOTES

1. Following the convention proposed in Kirch (1984) and Kirch and Green (1987), we distinguish between a *proto* language, an *ancestral* society, and a *parental* population. Roger Green (personal communication) has pointed out that one should really refer to Ancestral Oceanic Societies (plural), given the regional variation in the cultures of these societies when they were “tiny, widely scattered, small-scale social groupings tied together by an extensive set of interaction networks.” For convenience we will refer to Ancestral Oceanic Society in the singular.
2. Much of the debate about the reality of the Melanesian/Polynesian contrast (Hau’ofa 1981; Thomas 1989) has focused on the distinction between types of leadership—big men vs. chiefs—(Sahlins 1963), overlooking the significant contrasts in Island (Oceanic speaking) Melanesia and Polynesia between types of descent systems—unilineal vs. cognatic—and forms of marriage alliance—elementary vs. complex.
3. According to Blust (1978, 1993a, 1998) the OC family tree should begin with a binary split between the Admiralties and the remaining OC languages.

4. It may be, however, that Lapita pottery was an innovation of the non-Admiralties Ancestral Oceanic Society (Blust 1998).
5. The following abbreviations are used in this paper: P parent, F father, M mother, C child, S son, D daughter, G sibling, B brother, Z sister, E spouse, W wife, H husband, e elder, y younger, ss same sex, os opposite sex, ms man speaking, ws woman speaking.
6. Tables 2 and 3 are based on Murdock and White's (1969) Standard Cross-Cultural Sample, which is a great improvement over the one used in Murdock's (1947) early study of bifurcate merging terminology and unilineal descent and his later (Murdock 1968a) study of sibling terminology. Murdock and White's sample consists of 186 societies chosen from 200 world sampling provinces (Murdock 1968b). (The reasons for the imperfect match between sample size and number of provinces are given in Murdock and White 1969: 332.) Tables 2 and 3 show a slightly smaller number of societies because of the absence of data or questions about the coding of kin terms or descent and residence rules and the lack of alternative societies from the same sampling province.
7. In Lévi-Strauss' (1982: 174) sense of the term, a "house" is "a corporate body holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both." Ethnographic examples of houses include the Kwakiutl *numaym*, the Balinese *dadia*, and European noble houses. House societies are markedly aristocratic. The concept therefore fits some but not all Austronesian and Oceanic societies. (See J. J. Fox 1993.)
8. Table 5 is based on Column 25, "Cousin Marriage," in the WEA. Marriage systems were coded as follows:  
 Elementary structures: marriage with a first cross-cousin (C, Cc, Cm, Cp, D, Dp, Em, Fm, Gp, M, Mm, Pp); marriage with a specified second cross-cousin, notably MMBDD or FMBSD (Rr and S\*, O\*);  
 Complex structures: marriage prohibited with any first or second cousin (N); marriage allowed with any first cousin (Q); marriage allowed with any second cousin (S); marriage with a parallel cousin (Da, E, Fa, G).  
 Not counted because coding is ambiguous: evidence available only for first cousins (O); some but not all second cousins prohibited (R).

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## ABSTRACT

An analysis combining historical linguistic, ethnological, and cross-cultural data can be used to reconstruct the general features of Ancestral Oceanic social organization, including descent, residence, stratification, and marriage alliance. The motivation for this analysis derives in part from two conclusions of Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*: (1) Island (Oceanic-speaking) Melanesia is much less bilateral than commonly thought; and (2) Island Melanesia represents a continuation of Austronesian systems of generalized exchange. As a test of the proposed reconstruction, it is compared with the social organization of the Island Melanesian community Green and Pawley used as an ethnographic guideline in their recent historical linguistic and archaeological study of early Oceanic house architecture and settlement patterns. The results of this analysis have important implications for previous and current hypotheses regarding Ancestral Oceanic Society. **KEYWORDS:** Oceanic ethnology, Ancestral Oceanic Society, Oceanic kinship and social stratification, culture history, and historical linguistics.